



ATTENDANCE

Committee Members				
NAME	PRESENT		NAME	PRESENT
Ned Curran, Chair	YES		Pat Mumford	YES
Johnsie Beck	YES		Peter Pappas	YES
Mark Casper	NO		Ken Randall	NO
Cindy Chandler	YES		Wendy Spanbauer	YES
John Crosland	YES		Allen Tate	YES
Frank Emory	YES		Betty Turner	YES
Ray Eschert	YES		Virginia Keogh	NO
Claire Fallon	YES		Ed McMahan	YES
Anthony Fox	YES		Randy Kincaid	NO
David Howard	YES		Charles Knox	YES
Steve Iannarino	YES			
Non- Committee Members				
Vi Lyles, Lee Institute	YES		Natalie English, Chamber	YES
Doug Bacon, Lee Institute	YES		Norm Steinman, City	YES
Deborah Goldberg, County	YES		Mary Thomsen, REBIC	YES
Dan Gallagher, CDOT	YES		Valaida Fullwood, Lee Institute	YES
Andy Grzymiski, City	YES		Danny Pleasant, CDOT	YES
Bill Coxe, Huntersville & Mecklenburg-Union TCC	YES		Jim Schumacher, City Manager's Office	YES
Sarah King, City	YES		Hemal Shah, Town of Cornelius	YES

WELCOME AND REVIEW OF MEETING OBJECTIVES

Committee Chair Ned Curran called to order the 10th meeting of the Committee of 21 at 10:22 am. The meeting took place at the Government Center, Conference Room CH-14. Curran reviewed the agenda and emphasized the need to make key decisions.

REVENUE SOURCES - DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

■ **Vehicle Registration Fee:** An additional \$30 would generate \$18 million/year countywide.

Committee discussion points:

- Needs to include an explicit and strongly worded requirement about revenue being dedicated to road maintenance and cannot to be substituted. Legislation could include specific language about "maintenance of effort."
- Fee could potentially go as high as \$118 (200% increase) with all the proposed increases— a portion of which can be attributed to inflationary increases given the fee has not changed in approx. two decades.
- Tipping point, in terms of competitiveness: "How much is too much?"
- As a "user tax" this fee generally falls below the radar and does not impact competitiveness.
- Recommended increases from both the Committee of 21 and the 21st Century Committee coming into the legislature simultaneously could pose a problem.
- On the other hand, piggybacking on a state and local need seems doable.
- Funds collected in a town would be used in that town.
- What about unincorporated areas? Could these be sorted by their spheres of influence?

Consensus: All Green Cards (12)

■ **Vehicle Miles Travel (VMT) Fee:** Committee members discussed how their committee's recommendations relate to those of the 21st Century Committee.

Consensus: All Green Cards (12)

■ **Tolls:** Discussions opened with clarification of the initial concept of adding "managed lanes," whose toll revenue would first be used to pay the bond and then with any excess improvements would be made to adjacent lanes on expressway. Committee members requested further clarification and discussion of tolling options.

Steinman reviewed the three tolling options:

- 1) Build new road(s) with tolls (e.g., Monroe Bypass Connector) — Not an option in Mecklenburg County.
- 2) Charge all drivers using an existing freeway. A higher toll is often charged during peak hours (called “congestion pricing”). Revenue from such tolls is used to maintain roads and to pay for new lanes.
- 3) Add and/or designate new, special lanes (called “managed lanes,” “hot lanes,” and “fast lanes”) and only charge drivers using specific lanes. A common example is high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes. Toll revenue from managed lanes is specifically used to pay for the additional lanes and once the bond is paid excess revenue can be applied to expenses related to the pre-existing lanes of that expressway.

Steinman reported that cost projections for adding toll roads varies greatly depending on the expressway segment. In some cases the cost would be relatively low (e.g., I-85), and in other instances where a complete overhaul is needed the expense would be high (e.g. I-77 South). He noted that the Turnpike Authority is not using the managed lane concept in its current models.

Committee discussion points:

- 21st Century Committee is considering a proposal for I-95 to become a toll road.
- There’s a risk that managed-lane tolling might not generate sufficient revenue to cover the entire cost for additional lanes.
- Rather than go halfway with managed lanes, we need an approach that will generate sufficient revenue.
- We want to have an impact; recommending more studies won’t help us do that.
- Toll roads may only cause more congestion on secondary and tertiary roads due to drivers avoiding toll roads.
- While every driver on a toll road should pay something, HOV drivers and local residents could be charged less.
- Our recommendations should be as robust as possible because compromises and cuts may come later.
- Communicating to the public the value of adding toll roads is crucial (e.g. improved driving experience, better maintained roads).
- Our recommendations are the best of our ideas to take to the voters. The voters get to decide in the end.
- Without toll roads, how else will we generate the revenue needed to make significant improvements to roads and local transportation?

- Our recommendations should not jeopardize Mecklenburg's access to any new federal funds for roads.
- Turnpike Authority requires the following: (1) A free parallel road must exist as an alternative to the toll road; and (2) Once the debt is serviced then the toll goes away.
- Tolling roads through the Turnpike Authority allows action without changes in legislation, so this recommendation is not necessarily subject to a referendum.
- Language must be included specifying *how* the toll revenue will be used.
- This recommendation should include a preamble that references the recent Fayetteville decision as an example of how the current equity formula is not working well for Charlotte.

Toll roads: Tolls on expressways I-77 (without a sunset clause) and 485 (with a sunset clause) to widen and complete road segments.

Conditions:

- Mecklenburg County tolling projects will come through the Turnpike Authority.
- Toll revenue will be reinvested locally, dollar for dollar.
- Toll revenue will be used to retire the debt for the road.
- Tolling is designed to generate sufficient revenue for intended road improvements.
- There will be maintenance of effort by state and federal bodies.
- Tolling will allow for diversion of traffic.
- Mecklenburg County will receive its fair share for loops, expressways and other roads.

Consensus – initial: Green-12, Yellow-5, Red-1

Consensus – reflecting shifts after discussion: Green-14, Yellow-4, Red-0

■ **Sales Tax:** Current tax: 7.25% (Breakdown: 4.50 % state; 0.50% to Mecklenburg transit; 2.25% used by city/county), plus 1.0% prepared food tax when applicable.

Committee discussion points:

- Presenters stated that sales taxes have the greatest impact on competitiveness.
- Why not keep Mecklenburg's ½ cent for transit and then go for the full one cent for roads? We need a full cent for roads, and it's better to go for it now rather than later.
- A sales tax of 9.25% is higher than most southern cities. How can we avoid overburdening people?

- How can this be packaged and presented to voters?
- Adding a sunset clause helps with accountability.
- A sunset clause impedes progress toward establishing a long-term program for road construction and maintenance.

Consensus - (A) Support for a sunset clause: Red-12, Yellow-4, Green-1

Consensus - (B) Support for ½ cent dedicated for roads: Green-17, Yellow-0, Red-0

Consensus - (C) Support for full 1 cent dedicated for road: Green-8, Yellow-5, Red-4

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNANCE

Pat Mumford reviewed a handout and presented ideas for a governance body that would be sensitive to various existing entities (e.g. MPO, DOT, MTC, TCC) as well as secure and manage funds for Mecklenburg County. Mumford expressed a preference for the Metro Transit Commission (MTC) model and suggested that committee consider converting the MTC into a transportation commission that would address both transit and road needs.

Allen Tate distributed a handout and advocated a governance body that models Pennies for Progress, which has proven success. Tate opposed the idea of mixing roads with transit. He suggested the county commission appoint the governance body for roads.

Committee discussion points:

- Accountability is the important thing.
- TTC is an advisory group for MUMPO that consists of city staff members, including representatives from the seven Mecklenburg municipalities.
- MTC has a citizens advisory group.
- It is a potential conflict of interest for CATS to oversee dollars for roads.
- Do most citizens have the knowledge, out of the starting gate, to make these decisions, compared to elected officials and staff?
- Key selling point for Pennies For Progress is the citizen involvement on its governance body.
- How can we assure equity and a balance of power among representatives?
- To whom or what entity does this governance body report?
- This governance body should have the authority to decide whom they engage and the flexibility to engage a variety of groups as needed.
- This body will have no teeth if it is only an advisory or prioritization group.
- Will this body have the ability to float a bond? Or will it oversee pay-as-you-go projects only?

- Ideally, this governance body should have bonding capacity.

Creating a transportation authority comprising a cross-section of citizens from the city and towns.

Consensus: Green-11, Yellow-3, Red-0

Further discussion points:

- The intent of forming such a governing body is to concentrate on roads and to de-politicize the road construction process as much as possible.
- This authority provides an opportunity for Mecklenburg to take a more strategic approach to addressing complex issues related to its roads.
- Authority would be responsible for the allocation and use of locally generated ½ cent sales tax, and as well as act the coordinating body for state, local and regional roads.
- What about how other revenue is spent?
- Authority could be the seed for a regional group, eventually extending across state and county lines.
- Over time, this group could take on more responsibility.
- We're trying to create a single group for the citizens to hold accountable.
- Citizens from the county (7 municipalities) should be selected, respectively, by a full body (e.g. commission, council) rather than by a single official (e.g., mayor, manager).
- How can we avoid recreating the dynamics that already exist on the NCDOT Board?
- This authority must provide ways for people to move outside their comfort zone. For example, seek unaffiliated membership rather than assembling people who are protecting their identified interests.

REPORT CONTENT AND FORMAT

Lyles reviewed a handout outlining the content for the committee's final report. Members agreed to sign the core document (a three-page executive summary). A member requested sufficient time to review and approve the document before having to sign it.

CLOSING

Curran called the meeting to an end at 2:05 pm and announced the next meeting on December 15 (11 am to 1:15 pm).